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Maricopa County Regional Trail System Plan Phase One

White Tank Mountain Regional Park
Lake Pleasant Regional Park
Cave Creek Recreation Area
Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area

Executive Summary

Vision

Our vision is to connect the majestic open spaces of the Maricopa County Regional Parks with a nonmotorized trail system.



June 19, 2002

Maricopa County Trail Commission

Maricopa County Department of Transportation
Flood Control District of Maricopa County
Maricopa County Parks and Recreation
Maricopa County Planning and Development



Maricopa County

Introduction

In February 2000, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors formed the Maricopa County Trail Commission and unveiled their plans to develop a Regional Trail System. The Regional Trail System is a natural step in the County's regional planning process. It meets goals identified in all four elements (Land Use, Transportation, Environmental, and Economic Development) of the *Maricopa County 2020, Eye To the Future, Comprehensive Plan* adopted October 20, 1997.

The Regional Trail System's goals are to connect the County Park System, link recreational corridors around the Valley, and help preserve open space in the community. The project will capitalize on existing right-of-ways such as canals, parks, utility corridors, and flood control projects. The Commission is developing community partnerships to make the program a reality. The Commission hopes that this project will be a source of pride for the entire community.

A project team was formed with staff from the Maricopa County departments of Transportation, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Development, and Flood Control

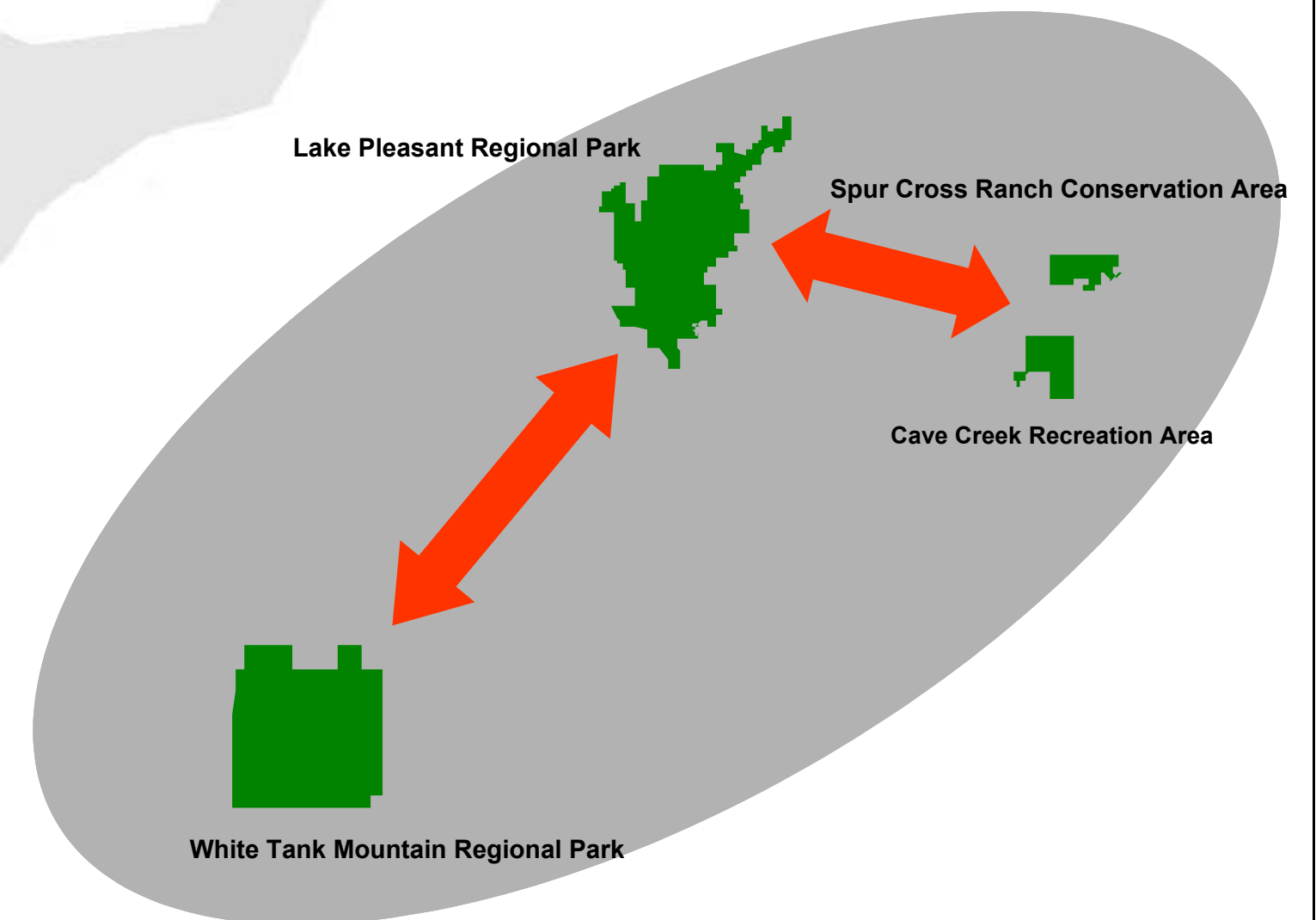
District. They began with a pilot project centered on Lake Pleasant Regional Park. Their task was to identify the best trail corridors linking White Tank Mountain Regional Park, Lake Pleasant Regional Park, Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area, and Cave Creek Recreation Area.

This area was selected for the first phase of the study because the majority of the corridor is in unincorporated Maricopa County and it contains significant property owned by the Flood Control District (FCDMC). In addition, several planned developments in the area were being proposed and there was concern that continuous trail access might be lost. There were also two major studies, the 2001 Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) *West Valley Multi-Modal Transportation Corridor Master Plan* and the 2002 FCDMC *Agua Fria River Watercourse Master Plan*, that provided significant data and recommended trail alignments within the study area.

Phase One will serve as a template for the entire trail system. It includes basic trail design guidelines and an implementation plan that will guide future development of the trail.



White Tank – Spur Cross Corridor Study



Study Area

Goals and Policies

The overall goal of the Maricopa County Regional Trail System is to establish a continuous trail system connecting the County's regional parks. Natural river systems, trails, and adjacent parks have long been recognized for their environmental protection, recreation values, and aesthetic qualities. Trail systems can also enhance property values, increase tax revenues, mitigate impacts on the natural environment, reduce motor vehicle traffic, and promote a local identity. The following goals and policies are intended to facilitate and encourage the development of the regional trail system. A **goal** is a concise statement describing a condition to be achieved. It does not suggest specific actions, but describes a desired outcome. A **policy** is a specific statement to guide decision making.

Goal 1: Provide a shared use, non-motorized trail system to connect the Maricopa County Regional Parks together.

Policy: Establish methods for trail acquisition, design, development, and maintenance that maximize community-contributed materials & services, and other trail establishment options at little or no cost to the county.

Policy: Public and private agencies should participate in all phases of trails development and implementation.

Policy: Provide separation of users to minimize hazards.

Policy: Coordinate the regional trail and its design with the trail design plans of cities and other public agencies, especially in relation to trail linkages.

Policy: Seek opportunities to designate or construct future trails on lands already under public ownership.

Policy: Seek trail opportunities through easements, dedications, joint use agreements, and other appropriate methods with public and quasi-public agencies.

Policy: Development projects, proposed on lands upon which a trail or pathway in the Regional Trail Plan has been identified, should dedicate and improve land for such trail or pathway purposes where a nexus exists between the impacts of the proposed development and the dedication/improvement requirements.

Policy: Establish and maintain a trail system that provides a diversity of quality outdoor recreation opportunities by locating trails of varying lengths and challenge within the full spectrum of recreation settings in Maricopa County.

Policy: The trail should, wherever feasible, include grade-separated intersections at major road crossings and at other physical barriers along the corridor.

Policy: All Maricopa County departments will incorporate the regional trail in the planning and design phases of any project adjacent to or crossing a regional trail corridor.

Policy: Wherever feasible, Maricopa County departments will construct trail crossings at points of contact on existing, programmed, and planned County public infrastructure to set anchor points for future trail alignments. Maricopa County will encourage other entities to do the same.

Goal 2: Link metropolitan areas, municipal trails, communities, and neighborhoods with regional non-motorized multi-modal corridors.

Policy: Provide connections to existing neighborhood trails and on-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Policy: Provide signed access points/gateways to neighborhoods.

Policy: Create well-defined trailheads that have good transit connections.

Policy: Coordinate with public agencies and developers to ensure appropriate trail connections are planned, constructed, and maintained.

Policy: Promote the construction and maintenance of trails by the private development sector.



Goal 3: Provide open space corridors to protect natural and cultural resources from development.

Policy: Protect sensitive ecological and archeological sites.

Policy: Discourage creation of informal trails.

Policy: Wherever possible, trails should be designed to enhance the natural landscape and not be detrimental to the natural environment.

Policy: Establish and designate trails, where feasible, that correspond to existing trails, paths, or roads that have already disturbed the environment.

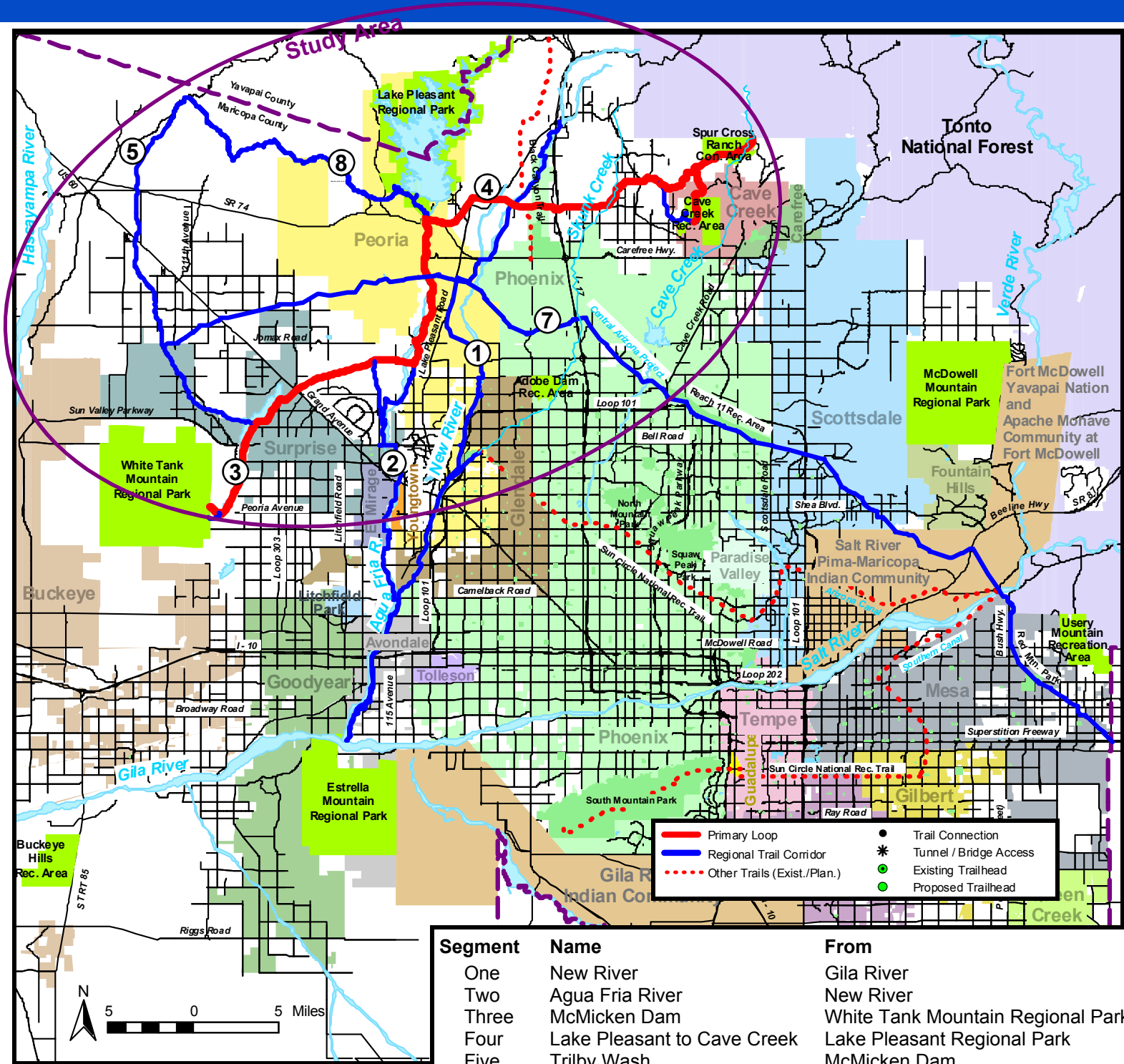
Policy: Provide trail corridors that can assist in the preservation of quality open space in Maricopa County.

Policy: Promote development and use of trails for environmental education.

Policy: Promote the establishment of open space and trail corridors in adjacent counties that can be connected by trails with the Maricopa County Regional Trail System.



Trail Alignments



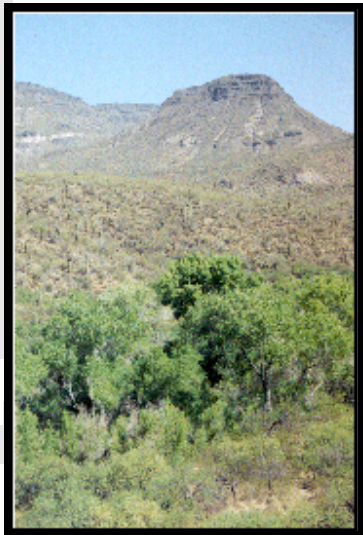
Proposed Trail Alignments

Segment	Name	From	To	Miles
One	New River	Gila River	New River	42
Two	Agua Fria River	New River	Lake Pleasant Regional Park	26
Three	McMicken Dam	White Tank Mountain Regional Park	Agua Fria River	19
Four	Lake Pleasant to Cave Creek	Lake Pleasant Regional Park	Cave Creek Recreation Area	27
Five	Trilby Wash	McMicken Dam	Northern County Border	23
Seven	Central Arizona Project	Trilby Wash	Eastern County Border	68
Eight	Morgan City Wash	Trilby Wash	Lake Pleasant Regional Park	16
Total Miles				221

Recommended Trail Alignments

The recommended trail alignments in Phase One of the Maricopa County Regional Trail System are shown in Figure 5. These alignments are the result of careful analysis by the project study team of all the available data. The exact placement of the trail in each alignment has not been identified. The project team anticipates that this will be done as each segment progresses towards design. Where the trail is identified inside a park, the master plan for that park will determine the exact trail placement. Where the trail is identified on FCDMC property, the master plan for that flood control facility will set the placement of the trail. Other trail placements will be determined during negotiations with the agencies or individuals holding ownership or having control over specific properties. Descriptions of each segment including aerial, ownership, natural features, and jurisdiction maps are included on pages 11-29. Photographs of each area are included to help explain the terrain and show some of the existing facilities along the route.

Phase One identifies 221 miles of potential trails. The primary loop, shown in red on the map, extends approximately 51 miles. This route has been selected as a priority because it provides the most direct connections between the parks located in Phase One.



Three of the recommended segments extend outside the boundaries of the Phase One study area. These are the New River, Agua Fria River, and Central Arizona Project (CAP) corridors. The New River and Agua Fria River segments have already been studied by the Maricopa Association of Governments and the Flood Control District of Maricopa County. Since the ultimate goal of the Maricopa County Trail Commission is to connect all the regional parks, it is appropriate to include the entire corridors from the existing studies at this time. Identifying only a portion of the corridor seemed counter-productive. The same rationale applied to the Central Arizona Project Aqueduct. The CAP was included from Trilby Wash to the eastern boundary of Maricopa County. The canal cuts across the center of the study area and has the potential to become a major trail route across the entire County. A feasibility study sponsored by several jurisdictions to determine how to incorporate a shared use path along the canal will be completed in 2003.

Design Guidelines

The Maricopa County Regional Trail System is proposed as a non-motorized, shared-use, multi-modal corridor used for transportation and recreation. Where possible, it will feature a primary hard-surface trail and a secondary soft-surface trail. The trails will generally, but not always, be parallel to each other in the same corridor. Some corridors may accommodate only one trail surface, either hard or soft, due to terrain or other constraints.

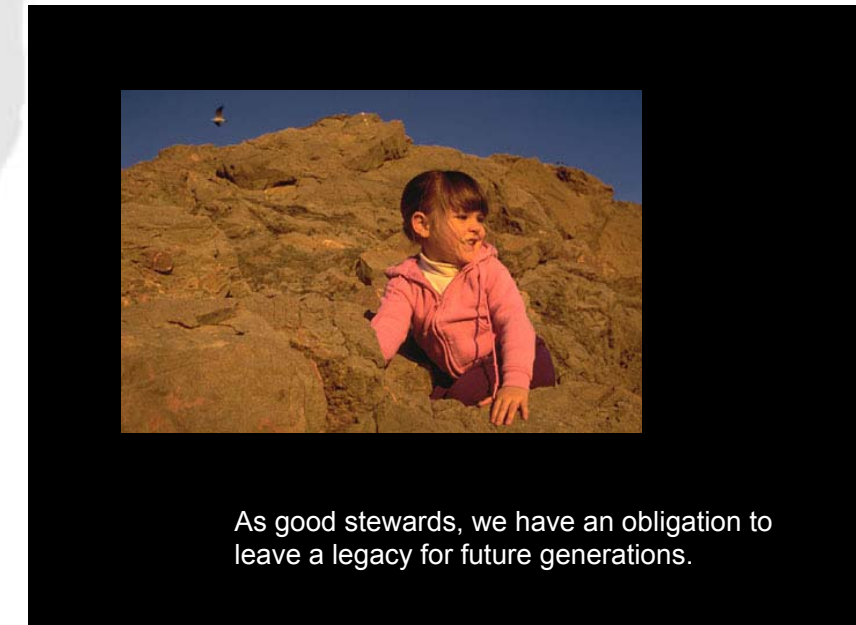
All trails will be designed and constructed following national design guidelines identified either in the *AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, *Americans with Disabilities Act*, the *USDOT Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access Parts I and II*, or the *Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Trails for the Twenty-First Century*. In addition, the trails should be designed in accordance with the design recommendations identified in the *MAG West Valley Multi-Modal Transportation Corridor Master Plan*. See Appendix A for the Trail Classification and Corridor Prototype Designs from the MAG study. Additional

design details from the *MAG West Valley Multi-Modal Transportation Corridor Master Plan* are available in Appendix B.

Two primary criteria used in the selection of trail alignments in this plan were trail width and grade. It is recommended that the tread, the useable width of the path, for hard-surfaced trails be 12 feet wide. The width for soft-surfaced trails may vary depending on terrain, expected usage, and other design factors. The preferred corridor width to accommodate both surfaces is 100 feet. Less than 100 feet is acceptable if limitations exist. This provides the ability to separate different types of users from each other and allows the trail to wind around obstacles, vegetation, and terrain. The recommended minimum corridor width to accommodate both surfaces is 28 feet. This width should be allowed only for short distances to provide connections between facilities. Corridors less than 28 feet wide may only accommodate one trail surface, either hard or soft. Ideally, most grades will be less than 5%. Steeper grades may be allowed if mitigated with proper landings.



Public Involvement



The public participation for the first phase of the Maricopa County Regional Trail System took a number of forms. Four open house meetings were held. A web page was created. Articles appeared in local newspapers. Announcements were made on television and presentations were given to service clubs and other organizations.

An effort was made to make as much information available on the internet as possible. Two web sites were used in this process. The primary site for the Maricopa County Regional Trail Program was <http://www.maricopa.gov/trail/>. Additional information was placed on the MCDOT Bicycle Program site at <http://www.mcdot.maricopa.gov/bicycle/bike.htm>. The web sites featured background information on the Maricopa County Trail Commission, the "Name the Trail Survey," frequently asked questions, and presentations on the pilot study.

An important component of the public involvement process was reaching out to civic organizations to enlist their help in the development of the regional trail concept. A computer presentation was developed by the project staff to assist in this effort.

A number of articles about the regional trail plan were printed in area newspapers while the study was being completed. They helped to generate interest in the trail concept and kept the public informed about the plan's progress. Every effort was made by project staff to meet with reporters in person or by telephone to facilitate the interviews. Local newspapers were also used to advertise the public meetings.

Implementation Plan

Regional Trail System Implementation Plan

The elements of the Implementation Plan are intended to serve as a guide for the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors (BOS), Maricopa County Trail Commission, and County departments to follow as the vision for the regional trail system becomes a reality. The text and the Trail Implementation Guide on this page identify the actions to be taken and an estimated time line for those actions. The chart also indicates what method will be used to complete the actions. Completing the plan, for example, is a planning process. Adopting the plan is a legislative process.

General Information

Maricopa County Trail Commission

Identify the remaining corridors and complete the necessary planning studies.

Regulatory

Each segment of the trail should be approved and adopted by the Maricopa County Trail Commission and the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors.

County departments will update any goals, policies, codes, and ordinances necessary to protect regional trail corridors and facilitate the realization of the regional trail system.

Framework

Establish a framework for design, construction, maintenance, and management. The Maricopa County Department of Parks and Recreation should be given the authority to operate the regional trail system as a network of linear parks in cooperation with any counties, cities, towns, or agencies involved.

Appropriate funding should be provided to this agency to properly staff, operate, and maintain the trail system.

Prioritization

The Maricopa County Trail Commission should establish a set of Prioritization Criteria to help focus where energy is spent. As corridors are adopted, the decisions to purchase or otherwise obtain necessary rights-of-way, construct trail segments, or participate in intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) with other agencies will need to be prioritized.

Advocacy

Establish a nonprofit advocacy organization on behalf of the Maricopa County Regional Trail System that supports the trail system. This organization could participate in fundraising activities to enhance the Maricopa County Regional Trail System and reach out for volunteers to trail users' groups like bicyclists, equestrians, hikers, and others.

Action Plans

Action Plans with 1-3 year increments should be developed using the Prioritization Criteria. These will identify partners, at risk property, and develop a schedule for the preservation of rights-of-way by affected jurisdictions. The action plans will establish timelines for trail design and construction. The action plans will include funding strategies.

General Trail Implementation Guide

Action	Description	Timeline (5 years)	Method
Complete Trail Plan	Identify remaining corridors and carry out planning studies.		Planning
Adopt Segment	Trail Commission recommends to BOS to adopt corridor planning studies and preferred segments.		Legislative
Adopt Ordinances and Codes	Departments and agencies amend their policies and procedures to incorporate trails. BOS adopts ordinances and codes.		Existing Process Legislative
Designate Authority	Trail Commission recommends to BOS that Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department be the agency responsible for the trail program. This includes the ability to plan, design, build, operate, and maintain the trail system.	*	Legislative
Provide Resources	Trail Commission recommends to BOS staffing and funding needs.		Planning Legislative
Adopt Prioritization Criteria	Select objective criteria to guide future design and construction.		Planning
Prioritize Segments	Use prioritization criteria to select specific segments for right-of-way acquisition, design, and construction.		Planning
Establish Nonprofit	Trail Commission recommends to BOS that a not-for-profit organization be established to support the trail system.		Management
Develop Segment Action Plans	Develop scopes of work, schedules, and budgets to accomplish prioritized segments. Allow flexibility for at-risk properties and opportunities as they arise.		Project Management

Timeline Key: * Immediate Time anticipated Continues into the future